



Council 4 AFSCME Public Safety Chapter Testimony
February 22, 2022

Chairman Horn, Chairman Osten and members of the Public Safety Committee:

My name is Brian Anderson. I am a legislative director for Council 4 AFSCME's 2,000 member police locals and many state and municipal emergency dispatchers.

Council 4 is in support of **S.B. 135 AN ACT CONCERNING ACCREDITATION STANDARDS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT UNITS.**

This bill allows police departments to seek CT POST accreditation, rather than the more expensive CALEA (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies) accreditation. POST is a state agency that licenses all Connecticut police officers, state and municipal. POST has a strong and admirable reputation in Connecticut. It is just as thorough as CALEA. It is considerably less expensive.

To be accredited by CALEA, the fee structure depends on the department. There is an initial cost of either \$8,475 for departments up to 24 employees (this includes civilian staff), \$11,450 for 25-199 employees, and \$16,125 for agencies with 200 and up.

Those fees cover the first three years, which is how long the department has to "get accredited." Around the 3 year mark, CALEA sends assessors out to do an assessment to determine if the department meets the standards. The department has to pay for this on-site assessment. Its website says the actual costs are impacted by lodging, airfare, and the number of assessors utilized and other factors specifically related to the assessed agency and the geographical area which it is located. So clearly the on-site assessment isn't cheap. If after the assessment the department is accredited, the department then pays annual continuation fees, which they estimate as either \$3,470, \$4,065, or \$5,000, depending on the same size

structure as listed earlier. Those fees likely go up as time goes on, as the cost of the every 4 year on site assessment is built into those annual fees. If a department can't get accredited in the 3 year timeframe, they can request an extension at a cost of 35% of the initial accreditation fee.

Our members are constantly reminded that departments face growing costs and shrinking resources. There are few if any fully staffed police departments. Our members are often ordered in to work double shifts or even longer hours. Our members have lost pensions in several departments. Many officers face zero wage increases over a span of years. Training has just about disappeared in some departments. Police vehicles are often in poor shape. This is due to a lack of resources. These factors may lead to the difficulty that departments are having recruiting and retaining officers.

Council 4 supports HB 5176, An Act Concerning A Study of the Powers, Duties, Benefits and Classification of First Responder. Emergency dispatchers are unsung heroes. They save lives every day. Our members support any effort to increase their compensation and benefits. We thank this committee for recognizing the toll their job takes from stress when you assisted the Labor Committee in passing a law last year (PA 21-107) making dispatchers eligible for post traumatic stress illness workers' compensation coverage. There is a saying in our union hall that "If you save one life they call you a hero. If you save 100 lives they call you a dispatcher." One immediate remedy that would help dispatchers is to extend portal-to-portal workers compensation to emergency dispatchers, similar to the coverage for police officers, firefighters and corrections officers.

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2021/ACT/PA/PDF/2021PA-00107-R00SB-00660-PA.PDF>

Council 4 supports **S.B. 133, AN ACT ALLOWING POLICE OFFICERS TO WEAR RELIGIOUS HEAD COVERINGS AS PART OF A POLICE UNIFORM.** Members of the Sikh community are required to wear a headdress as part of their faith. The US military and several US police departments allow active duty members to wear such headdress. It has not impeded their ability to perform their tasks with distinction.

I am happy to answer any questions.

Head dress bill:

https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&which_year=2022&bill_num=133

Accreditation bill:

https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&which_year=2022&bill_num=135